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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF CENTRAL REFERENCE

*"Production 3ela
BR-BI Merger"*

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Assistant Director for Central Reference

SUBJECT : Staff Study, BR-BI Merger

PROBLEM: To make a preliminary survey of the problems inherent in the transfer of the Division of Biographic Information, Department of State (State/BI) to the Central Intelligence Agency.

FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

1. State/BI currently has a T/O of 62 and utilizes some 9,000 square feet of floor space. At present, the on-board complement numbers 57. Its annual operating cost totals about \$400,000- of which amount \$111,000 is budgeted by State, with the remainder coming from support contracts.
2. The Department is responsible for the collection and maintenance of biographic information on foreign political, cultural, economic and sociological personalities (Foreign Service Manual, Volume 4, 500 Series; DCID 1/9).
3. State/BI has coordinated the Department's biographic program, working closely with the political desks and in some instances with the foreign posts, on problems of coverage and evaluation.
4. The Department is the primary user of political biographic intelligence and requires massive support.
5. State/BI maintains its records manually, has limited category control over its information, but has no mechanized operation.
6. The transfer of the State Department's biographic staff and files to the Agency has been the subject of a number of discussions and studies dating back to 1946. In fact, the change was almost effected in 1947 when, in connection with a State reduction in force, the Map Library and other geographic and cartographic functions were transferred to the Agency from State. At the last minute, in response to pressures from the political desks, sufficient funds were made

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available to retain BI in the Department. Historically, the vested interest of the Department has always been the deciding factor.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF PROBLEMS

1. EFFECT UPON STATE'S INTERNAL OPERATIONS. It is obvious, of course, that any change can be effected by official directive. Beyond this power of authority, however, it is urgent that we explore the actual impact of the reorganization upon State's operations. Specifically, would the various areas within the Department be capable of effective operation in depending upon another agency, geographically removed, for a very important type of basic intelligence? It is a moot point, particularly when one regards the current stage of development in the science of information handling and retrieval. Would the political desks, or the Visa Section, for instance, find the support effective? It is certain that the political desks will violently oppose the merger. Further, it is almost as certain that unless the newly-consolidated but "foreign" repository can provide better service than is available under the present set-up, many areas within the Department of State will increasingly come to depend upon "desk files" which they themselves would amass. (Here the duplication per se would not be the real problem- rather that information unique to the desk would be refused the central repository.) Nor is it beyond the realm of the conceivable that some areas, alerted to the change, will remove key-interest material from the file. This aspect of State's ability to function effectively without direct access to and control of the biographic files- cannot be overemphasized. Nor can one underestimate the massive support which the scope of their activities requires: support for foreign representation, negotiations, the UN, visits of foreign personalities, exchange programs, briefings for foreign tours, etc. Further, State/BI receives from the highest level requests which have the most agonizing deadlines. Could the support agency, geographically removed, meet such deadlines? It can be assumed that such pressures will, if anything, increase.

2. EFFECT UPON COLLECTION. Presumably, the reorganization will be accompanied by the rewriting of pertinent directives- e.g., DCID 1/9 and applicable portions of the Foreign Service Manual. It is further presumed that while such revisions will re-delegate responsibility for most phases of political biographic support, the responsibility for collection of political biographic information will remain with State's Foreign Service. To what extent, then, will the separation of collector and user adversely affect the former function? To what extent could the using agency impose effective control upon the field collector. (In this respect one should be aware of the reported difficulties faced by CIA in achieving satisfactory control over the activities and production of the Science Attaches; and the unwillingness of Foreign Service people generally to associate themselves with anything

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that smacks of "intelligence". Directives will also have to be issued to assure that certain types of biographic material, which are not presently disseminated outside of the Department, will be made available to the other agency. Of particular significance are the Biographic Data Forms- formerly known as CBD's (Confidential Biographic Data).

3. SECURITY ASPECTS- PERSONNEL. When the merger is accomplished, necessitating the consolidation of both people and files, personnel security will present a problem. A few of BI's people have CIA limited building clearances. Most have no CIA clearance. It is most probable that the Agency's Office of Security will refuse to clear a few, some or many of the current BI staff- and the more rigid clearance procedures which are apparently followed today would suggest that "some" or "many" will be rejected. This would argue against imminent merger since clearance would have to be initiated six-months-to-a-year prior to the merger in order to permit time for security checks and recruitment.

4. RECRUITMENT. A major problem. The current T/O of State/BI is 62- [REDACTED] There are approximately 55 people on board. With the latter figure, they are completely incapable of servicing both State and CIA, let alone the entire community. Their ability to service the community with a full complement (62) is even doubtful. It is likely that something in the neighborhood of 40 additional people would have to be recruited to assure acceptable community servicing. This is obviously a major recruitment program, one which would have to be initiated long before the actual merger.

5. ORGANIZATION. Would the initial consolidation take the form of distinct substantive branches (i.e., a Scientific Branch and a Political Branch) or would the files be consolidated on an area basis with one political analyst and one scientific analyst working on each country or group of countries? Expedience argues for the former- separate branches. This would be the most practical and the simplest manner in which to establish the organization, particularly with regard to file merger (e.g., BI card files are 4 x 6, BR's are 5 x 8). It is true that such an organizational structure would have all the BI people grouped together - a "hard core" of State people, as it were. Most, if not all, will be unwilling to come to the Agency- grave apprehension is already being expressed. It is undoubted that the grouping would possibly present a problem but it is a problem that would have to be accepted and watched closely. At any time in the future, consolidation easily could be effected if deemed necessary.

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6. INFORMATION HANDLING SYSTEM. At this time, at least, any attempt to machine the political biographic information would appear dangerously unwise. In addition to the fact that it would be a monumental job (further complicating the problem), there is the further doubt that the nature of the use to which the material is put would justify or even require machine control. State/BI has always contended that their type of operation does not lend itself to machining, that the nature and volume of category type requests are so extremely limited in their field that the need can effectively be met by (hand) category filing. Basically, this is probably true, and machine control is indeed not needed. Supporting this argument is the rapidly emerging conclusion that there is nowhere presently available any system which can effectively cope with our vast information load. Even OCR's dynamic automation research program bears this out. Existing EAM equipment, then, would have to be used, resulting in further proliferation of machine records files. At this point it is difficult to determine (without a survey of input and service statistics) the size of the machine support unit. It probably can be estimated, however, that an addition of at least three fourths of BI's present complement would be necessary (BI today; six classifiers, 5 punchers, 5 machine operators). It should be emphasized, however, that machine control of the political biographic information is probably not necessary and, at least initially, manual operation should be continued.

7. PHASING. It is impossible, of course, to consider physical consolidation before our move to the new building - at which time, presumably, space will be available. Prior to that time, BI should remain in its present quarters, subject to the administrative control of OCR and directed by a chief of OCR's choice. This, of course, is the most undesirable type of administrative organization yet there appears to be no other choice. Whatever the interim scheme, all necessary changes must be accomplished prior to the move to the new building. Every effort must be made to accelerate State's in-process recruitment for BI and assurances obtained that necessary space will continue to remain available. To assure complete cooperation during this period, the Agency should cause the issuance of directives from the highest possible level within the Department of State.

8. PLANNING. To emphasize the need for complete and detailed plans is not necessary. The planning, however, should be accomplished by a Task Force whose members should be relieved of all other duties and whose experience should reflect both sides of the operation. Above all, State Department pressures should not be permitted to force the Agency into hasty, ill-planned action.

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RECOMMENDATION

That a Task Force be appointed immediately to study the proposed merger and the inherent problems; that the Task Force recommend solutions thereto and submit a detailed merger plan; and that the Task Force include the former Deputy Chief of State/BI, Mrs. Barbara Finke, who is undoubtedly the most experienced biographic intelligence official in the Department of State.

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Chief, Biographic Register

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